

# NRO DECLASSIFICATION/RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS ON FILE

Approved For Release 2001/08/26 : CIA-RDP33-02415A000400300004-9

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31 MAR 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Comment on the IDEALIST Task Force Report

1. I have carefully reviewed the report of the IDEALIST Task Force and would like to comment on its findings before you make any final decisions.

2. The facts contained in the report are in general agreement with my own understanding of the problem, but I believe the report is deficient in two major areas.

a. It dwells far too much on Mainland China coverage to the comparative exclusion of contingency requirements in the rest of the world, and

b. It is rather unrealistic in treating the alternatives for a [REDACTED] capability. 25X1D

3. It is clear that the limited use of the U-2 against Communist China in the last two years does not justify the program alone. If, therefore, there is reason for us to continue, it must be based on the contingency that we would need to increase rapidly our surveillance of Communist China or other trouble spots in Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, or South America. Approval for overflights of any of these areas would be influenced by:

a. degree of U.S. Government concern,

b. vulnerability of the aircraft to air defenses in the area in question,

c. political acceptability to third countries with a mutual interest, and

d. alternative methods for collecting the desired intelligence.

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The history of the U-2 program shows that a wide variety of circumstances have led U.S. policy decision makers to use the aircraft in many parts of the world after evaluation of the above considerations. I see nothing that would argue that we would not find circumstances in the future where the decision to use this asset would not again be affirmative.

4. I am afraid that we, both in DDS&T and in the report itself, have made too much of the question of "covert" operations. Since the Gary Powers "shoot down" in 1960 I question whether we have run a truly covert operation. What we have done is operate in a quiet, sensible way where such countries as India, Thailand, and Nationalist China have been willing to cooperate and shoulder some of the responsibility for accidents, etc.

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5. There is a familiar school of thought, to some degree inherent in the Task Force report, that all such activities could just as easily be carried out under sponsorship of the U.S. Air Force. I cannot accept this thesis. Cooperation with the activities of this Agency and cooperation with an overt U.S. military activity are very different matters when viewed by lesser powers such as those with whom we have been, and potentially might be, involved. In this respect I find the U-2 program quite similar to paramilitary activity or other covert action programs.

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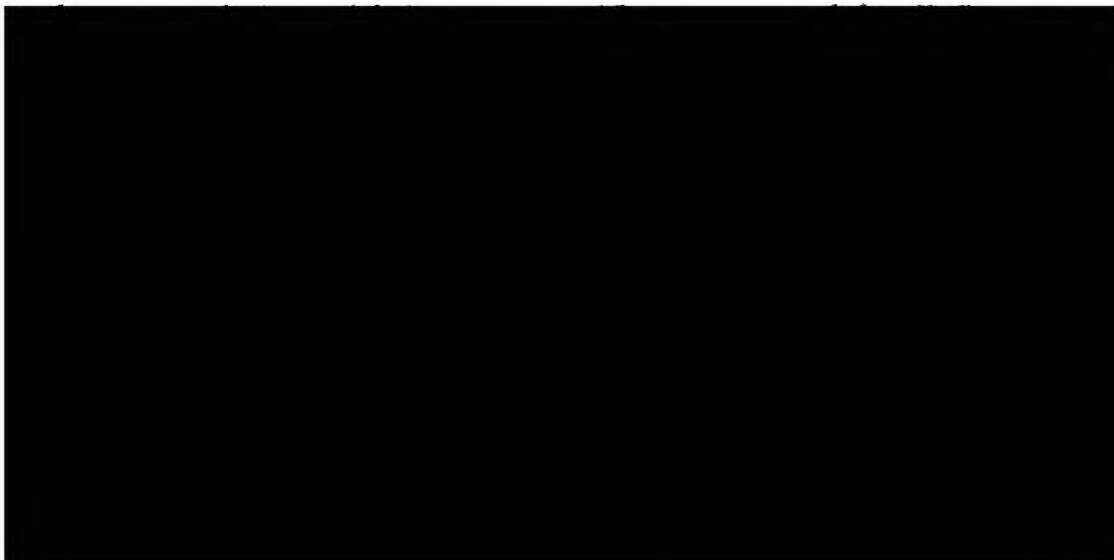
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7. In addition to a loss of control, I believe that  
[redacted]  
for other reasons.

a. Whereas Lockheed and other contractors do most of the maintenance on the aircraft and its complex equipment, they do so under tight Agency control, and I have no reason to feel they would do an acceptable job without such continuing control. We find it a tough job to keep these contractors performing up to satisfactory standards under present circumstances.

b. Certain of the highly sensitive defensive equipment aboard the aircraft should not in my view be turned over to any foreign government since it is the very latest U.S. state-of-the-art and compromise of this equipment is not acceptable.

c. Success of a Mainland overflight today depends heavily on latest knowledge of Chicom equipment and order-of-battle and thoughtful flight planning based on this understanding. Without the benefit of satellite photography and our advanced

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8. In sum, I continue to believe that if the Government wants the kind of capability we now have there is no acceptable alternative way to provide it. Air Force sponsorship would be politically provocative and turning these aircraft over to foreign governments who lack our sophisticated equipment and technique would be inviting these governments and the U.S. into dangerous waters. I have been on the fence for the last two years as to the extent which you should defend our U-2 activity. I recognize it is a complex question. I believe the program is still defensible; but, above all else, I believe the Government as a whole should decide to continue essentially as we are now or get out of the business altogether.



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SIGNED

Carl E. Duckett  
Deputy Director  
for  
Science and Technology

P.S. The most difficult problem in reacting to this report is the realization that I am not defending a best solution. I am well aware that the OXCART is still the best aircraft for the job but also recognize that it is no longer appropriate to fight that problem.

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